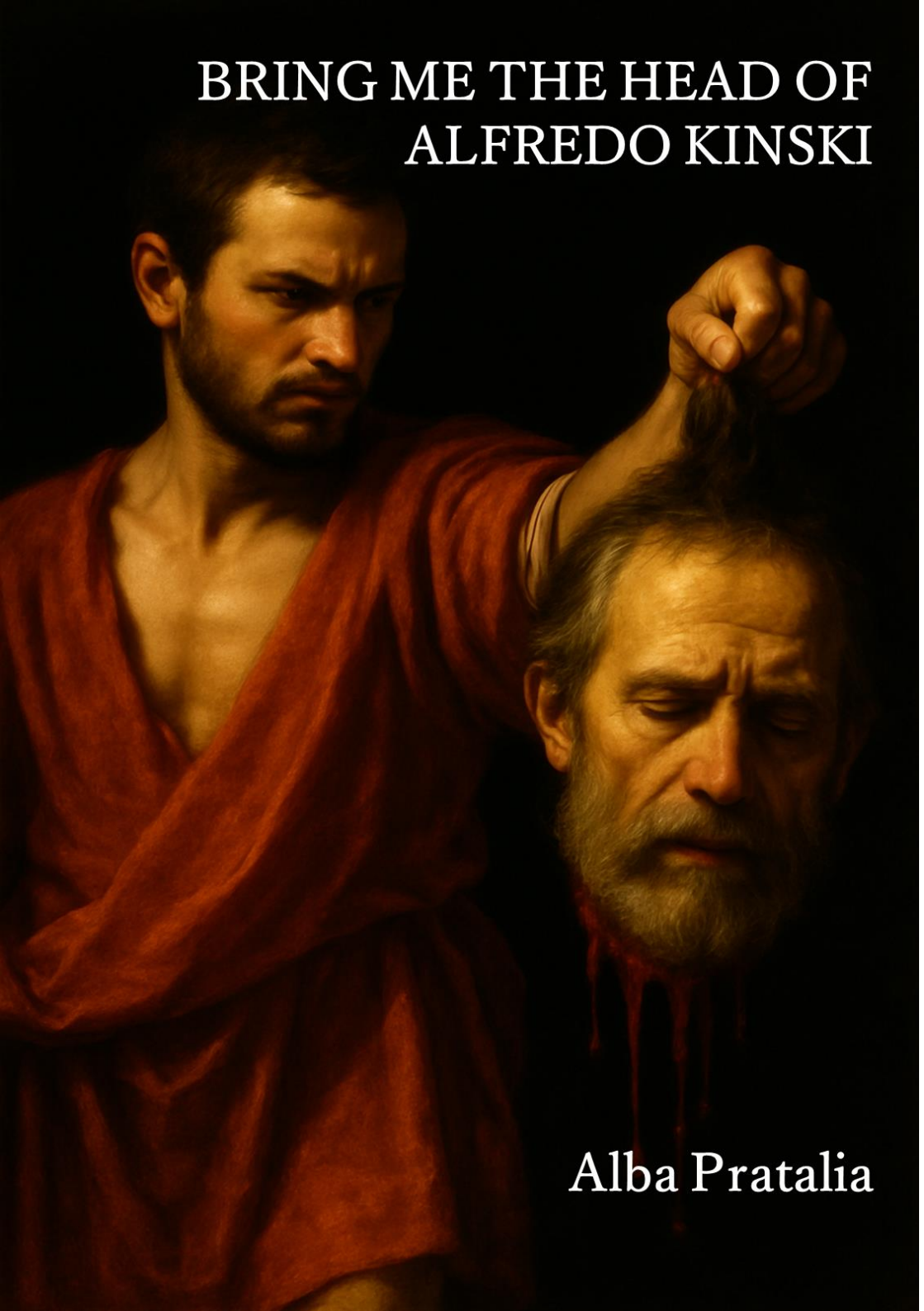
BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO KINSKI



Alba Pratalia

BRING THE HEAD OF ALFREDO KINSKI

By Alba Pratalia

I was there, in the jungle, by the river, playing with small rocks with the fish—who were, frankly, better company than most humans—when my cousin offered Werner Herzog to kill Klaus Kinski.

We'd been there for weeks, maybe months. Time had grown soft and pulpy in the humidity, like fruit left too long in the sun. The crew had either fled or melted into the foliage. The parrots had learned to mimic German profanities. Mosquitoes drank our blood and recited Nietzsche.

Herzog sat on a folding chair that hadn't folded in days, his boots submerged in the river, muttering aphorisms to a camp stove that no longer worked. And my cousin, in that sweet tone of voice reserved for suggesting sugar in coffee or murder in passing, said:

> "We could kill him, you know. Kinski.
> Make it look like an accident. Or not.
> Bring you the head."

Herzog didn't look up. He stirred the instant coffee with the butt of a pencil.

> "No," he said. "No. The man is a
> pestilence. But the camera loves
> pestilence."

And that should have been that.

But later that night, lying in hammocks we didn't trust, listening to Kinski scream at a tree for refusing to act, we wondered. Not about the morality, no. That ship had sunk long ago. We wondered what would have happened if we hadn't asked. If we had simply done it.

If we had walked out of the jungle, at dawn, barefoot, naked except for war paint made of mosquito guts, and presented the severed head of Klaus Kinski to Herzog on a silver platter we'd stolen from the catering truck. Like Herodes before Salome, trembling before the terrible fulfillment of desire disguised as request.

Would Herzog have recoiled in horror? Or would he have leaned forward slowly, looked into Kinski's glassy eyes, and whispered:

"Ah. Now the film may begin."

Would he have kissed the forehead and told us to roll camera?

Or would he have broken, finally, and screamed, *"Why did you do this? Now we have no film. Now we have no monster. Now we are only men!"*

The truth is—and I say this with the certainty only jungle madness can offer—I do not know.

But the fish do. They remember. They were there. And they do not forget.

And now I'm drinking beer and bile, sitting inside this—this—what? Architectural miscarriage? This laminated urinal with chairs? Sure, it's got "ocean view." Big bloody whoop. The ocean *exists*, congratulations. It's wet. It's got waves. It kills people. We clap.

And here I am, locked in a cubicle of soaked plywood, cracked plastic chairs, and historical layers of seagull shit like some kind of natural fresco, fresco à la mierda. The wind sneaks in sideways, smelling of rust, dead squid, and the moist sighs of yesterday's tourists. And still—they come. They get in. They sit down.

And they order *tea*.

Not just tea—*un tecito*. Diminutive. Cowardly. Apologetic. The tea equivalent of whispering *"don't mind me"* while setting fire to your dignity. Big, fat, greasy truck drivers, necks like tree trunks. Weatherbeaten motorcyclists, tatts like battle scars, leather clinging to sweat. And still—*"un tecito, porfa."*

They order a seafood empanada that leaks oil like an underpaid car—and chase it with *a tecito*. A plate of fries large enough to serve as life raft in case the "ocean view" gets too ambitious—and *a tecito*. They chew with their mouths open and their souls shut. And *they sip*.

What the hell happened?

When did the world flip?

Where's the rage? The vinegar? The scorched tongues and fire-belching rage of life? No, now it's all lukewarm and steeped.

And sitting here, with my beer full of backwash and regret, I wish—truly—that I were Klaus Kinski, trembling in my cousin's calloused hands, seconds away from becoming art by way of execution. At least then, someone would *do* something. No asking. No permission.

No *tecito*.

Look over there.
Yes, there—where it looks like all the rest: indifferent rock, grey foam, stubborn shrubs clinging to cracks like drunkards clinging to their last coin. You wouldn't notice it. Nobody would. This coast is a Xerox machine on autopilot.

But pretend—just for sport—you see a little rocky cove. Narrow, mean, with the kind of wet, jagged smile that chews up ankles and ambition.

There.

There, they tried to land weapons from Cuba. To kill Pinochet.
Yes, *that* Pinochet. The one in sunglasses. The one with the ironic moustache of a second-rate movie villain and the hands of a tax collector with unlimited power.
The one who overthrew a democracy just because he could pronounce "order" without choking.

The one with the killings, the tortures, the desaparecidos, the death flights over the Pacific like macabre sightseeing tours.
The one smiling for photographs with Pope John Paul II—yes, *that* pope, the rockstar pope, *il papa dei giovani*, back when popes still moonlighted as saints-in-training.
The J.P. 2.0—because version 1.0 got a little *too interested* in the Vatican Bank's money laundering disco night.

So yes, *that* Pinochet.

And fate—divine, cruel, or just bored—chose to assign a halfwit with a badge, a cop just ¾ of a stupid, but with ¼ still sharp enough to smell trouble. Maybe it was the wetness of the crates. Maybe it was the way revolutionaries wear guilt like wet socks. Whatever it was, he snorted at the wind and stumbled into history like a drunk into a wedding.

They found the crates. They caught the plot. They saved the dictator.

Nice, eh?

The revolution drowned in a rocky cove no one can point to. And now there's just salt, wind, and the sound of people ordering tecitos.

Did you know that in the CIA's *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* manual—yes, the cheerful bedtime read of every ethically bankrupt regime—the fine minds of Langley concluded that pain,

pure pain, administered for its own exquisite sake, is surprisingly *inefficient* at extracting information?

Yes. Apparently agony makes people say anything—*anything*—to make it stop. They'll tell you their mother's a Soviet submarine. They'll name their dog as the money courier. They'll confess to being Trotsky's ghost.

So then—*why*, you may ask, am I presently inserting these very fine, very long needles into the soft, trembling, glistening cartilage of the man sitting next to me?

Because we have a pact.

He cannot scream.
He cannot shriek.
He cannot contort, clench, twitch, or so much as bat an eyelash.
Because if he does—if even a single droplet of humanity leaks out of his painface—his family dies.

He must take the pain in silence, the way society takes neoliberalism: dumbly and with no safe word. He must take it until he tells me where the drug money went.

"Señor, yo quería solo un tecito."

Shut up, I say, *can't you see I'm narrating to the readers?* This is fourth-wall stuff. Highbrow torture prose. Don't ruin the tone.

Now, where was I?

"Señor, mis hijos nos están mirando."

For the love of—would you be quiet? What children? Whose children? Why are you even here? What do you—

Wait.

Wait, who the hell are *you*?

Where's the other guy? The one with the narco tattoo and the CIA file and the damp trousers?

"Yo quería solo un tecito."

Oh no.

Oh **fuck**.

Where did the *other* guy go?

Oh **fuckity fuck.**

This one *really* just wanted tea.

Oh **fuck**, there he is.

Running like his life depends on it—which, tragically, is a rare instance of *literal accuracy*.

He's bolting across the dust like a caffeinated goat, knees wobbling, arms flapping, shirt flaring behind him like a bad decision in motion.

> "No, no, no—*don't cross the highway*, you moron!"

Doesn't matter if it looks empty. That's the *first* lesson in the Kubark appendix: *Always suspect the seemingly calm desert to be an accomplice in your undoing.*

And sure enough—

TRUCK HORN: WOOOOOOO

The sound of fate with a diesel engine.

Then—

SMASH.

He comes apart like a Lego set hurled off a balcony. One foot goes northeast. A chunk of something I hope wasn't essential does a cartwheel into a cactus. His spine lands with a noise that sounds like a cello being insulted.

And as if the universe weren't done humiliating me, my *xeroxed* Kubark manuals—yes, annotated, highlighted, and printed on legal size by accident because I hit the wrong button—erupt from my tote bag in a celestial burst of bureaucratic confetti.

Pages fly:
"Hypnosis as an Accelerant in Rapport Building."
"Mock Executions and Birthday Cake: Balancing Tone."
"Pain: The Amateur's Temptation."

All swirling in the air like the CIA's final report to God.

Why?
Why would you cross a highway without looking?

Why would you run with knees like those?
Why did I trust a man who pronounces "Escobar" with a B-flat?

This—**this** is why I drink.
Because the desert is full of idiots, the CIA never footnotes properly, and even the damn tea drinkers get in the way.

And that's when my cousin Manuel WhatsApp video-called me.

Primo, primo, me están deportando.
Me: *¿Y qué deporte? ¿Tennis?*
¡No, idiota! Me están deportando de EE.UU.
Me: *¿Pero si te fuiste a pedido de ellos?*
Sí, pero dicen que ya no me necesitan más.
Me: *Diles que sabes de muchos narcos escondidos.*
Dicen que es por eso que me expulsan.

Me: *Concha tu mare, cojudo.*
Ayúdame tú, que conoces tantos federales.
Me: *Ellos que me conocen a mí porque me buscan, la reconcha tu mare... CUT THE CALL. NOW.*

Sorry. I—I have to go.

I don't have time to—

Here. Here follows a Google Translated version of it:

Cousin, cousin, are they deporting me?
What sport? Tennis?
No idiot. They're deporting me from the USA!
But you went there at their request.
Yes, but they say they don't need me anymore.
Tell them you know where many drug lords are hiding.
They say that's why they're expelling me.
Mother of God, you dumbass.
Help me, you know so many feds.
They know me because they're after me, motherf—... CUT THE CALL! NOW!

You see now?

This is why we can't have quiet torture sessions anymore.

Naaah. I'm not running. *They're* throwing out. *Not* sucking in. If they were sucking in, I'd be halfway up a senator's asshole with a diplomatic visa and a mango smoothie.

But here? Here we are.

Where *exactly*, you ask?

You *dare* me to name the place?

I *dare you* back. Go on. Name *this* caleta—this rotting plywood shoebox of a bar, half nailed to the coast, half to despair. Find it on a map. Google it. I *dare* you.

This place isn't a town. It's a **rumor**.

An urban legend passed between long-haul truckers and men who smell of gasoline and unfinished divorces. A place held together with rust, spit, and Señora Wendy's seafood spoon of authority.

They're running out of beer. Of *course* they're running out of beer. *Only I* drink it. Everyone else here, every last useless cocksucker in this heatstroke aquarium, only orders *weeny tea*. Little *tecitos*. Herbal eunuch piss in a mug.

"No Señora Wendy, no estoy gritando—"

SMACK. The seafood spoon. Hard. Right on the shoulder.

> "Ay! No, no me pegue... yes, yes, I'll drink pisco. I'll drink the damn pisco now that the beer's gone."

Another smack. Smaller. A reminder.

> "Yes, I'll have the cazuela. No, *no tea*. Not even weeny. Not even if it's artisanal, vegan, or blessed by a priest with a man bun. *NO TECITO.*"

Gracias.

You can stop hitting me now. No me pegue más.

She's gone.

Good. Because if one more tattooed biker asks for a chamomile, I swear I will drown myself in the soup.

A WEEK LATER.

They called it *La Perla del Pacífico*.
Pearl of the Pacific.
Of course they did. Everything that rots gets a poetic name first.

After braving Cape Horn—the icy asshole of the hemisphere—this was the first place that looked vaguely human: lights, electricity, whorehouses with working girls who had both eyes and enough teeth to negotiate pricing,

and toilets where the windows *actually* opened.
Civilization, in the loosest, most aspirational sense.

But don't go digging for pearls here now. You'll find bottle caps, fish guts, and the smell of failed salsa nights. Try and find a place where they play music that isn't trying to sell you a credit card or an STD.
I'm not even asking for live music—God forbid someone plays *an instrument*.
But something decent.
Something for people who once operated a rotary phone, who made mixtapes by timing the radio, who remember when "shuffle" meant dancing, not surrender.

And here I am now.
Smoking, as is tradition. Drinking, as is sacred.
Out of a bottle that came from a shelf labeled *"No preguntar"*.
It was offered to me by the barman—who only spoke in nods—after seeing my face and wordlessly pushing the whisky forward, on the condition I pointed my face outward toward the street and not at paying customers. I accepted. Gracefully. Like a gentleman who's been mistaken for vermin but still tips well.

And that's when I see you.

Poor lady.

I know you.

I know that slouch of the shoulders, that cigarette held like a relic, not a habit.
I know that look, the kind that says:

> "I've known love, and worse, I've known
> its echo."

Disillusion, thick in your eyes like the Pacific fog.
You learned the ancient truth:
Fools in love grow wise.
And the wise drink alone.

The years have changed you, somehow.
But I see you now.

Smoking.
Drinking.
Never thinking of tomorrow.

I know.

You miss the love you lost long ago.
And when nobody is nigh—
you cry.

And then, of course, the **final idiot** had to show up.

Or *idiotesse*, should I say—gender presumed, presumed reluctantly, tentatively, as one now presumes the weather or the sincerity of a smile. A **woman**, or a ghost cosplaying as one. Too late for a mic, so she posted up on the street,

by the flickering lamp that makes every face look like regret carved into soap.

Guitar tuned by a deaf furniture maker.
Voice in tune three out of four notes, which is more than most lovers and fewer than most birds.
But the song?
The song was right.

It didn't apologize.
It meant.

> *In a cart of forgetting before the break of day,*
> *from a station of time set on rolling away,*
> *Run Run went up north — I don't know*
> *when he'll be back.*
> *He'll come for the birthday of our loneliness.*

I dropped my cigarette into the puddle of someone else's vomit and felt like clapping.

I *was* up north.
I was there just days ago.
In that rotting cardboard rectangle with a bar counter and dreams leaking through the walls like wine through a paper cup.
North—where the land turns brittle and the sea forgets your name.

Three days later, a letter arrived.
Coral-colored lines, the kind you only find in stationery inherited from the aunt who never married.
Run Run writes from *somewhere*, always somewhere.

> He leaves Antofagasta without leaving a
> sign,
> and tells of an adventure
> that I'll now spell out line by line.

And so I read it.
Aloud.
To the seagulls, to the silence, to the tea drinkers still sipping like nothing in this world ever burned.

> **Ay, ay, ay, poor me.**

And what else can we say?

Yes. Yes, poor us all. Yes.

So right now—

Whisky bottle precariously wedged into the rusted railing, like a ship in dry dock.
Pants unzipped, cock in my hand, pissing a biblical deluge down the alley that smells like old squid and failure.
Cigarette dangling off my lip, tip curling into my cornea, the smoke stabbing like a jealous ex.
One eye closed.
The other one watching the city rot slowly under sodium lights.

Why should I care to live?

No, really.

Give me a **reason**.
Not a metaphor. Not a quote. Not some sad little Nietzschean fortune cookie.
A *real* one.

Because tonight I'm just a skeleton wrapped in sweat and bad decisions, pissing like it's protest, drinking like it's ritual, and breathing only because my body forgot how to stop.

I don't care.

I really don't.

I don't want to.
Not to live.
Not to write postcards.
Not to pretend today deserves a sequel.

Spare me already.

Let the wind carry me sideways into a ditch.
Let the sea swallow my name and misspell it forever.
Let Señora Wendy hit me one last time with the seafood spoon, and then close my tab for good.

Who is the father?
Who is the father?
Who is the father?

The room is hot. Wood creaks. Flies buzz. Curtains sway like slow witnesses.

Mother (screams): *No!*

Henchen move, gloved hand grabbing the girl's arm. A twist—
TAC —clean break. Bone, soft as fruit, gives way.

Girl (weeping in pain): *Alfredo Garcia! Alfredo Garcia!*

Silence. Then boots on floorboards.

The man turns. Hat low, eyes glassy. A flicker in the jaw.

"He was like a son to me."

He lights a cigar. Doesn't look at anyone.

"I'll pay a million to whoever brings me the head of Alfredo Garcia."

He takes a drag. Smoke rises. The mother sobs in the corner.

"Bring me the head of Alfredo Garcia."
"Bring it to me."

Ah, the good old times.

Those were the days.

You could break an arm, crack a bone, get a confession, set a bounty, light a cigar, and no one blinked. A million dollars for a head in a sack? Reasonable. Understandable. Poetic, even.

You could say things like *"Bring me the head of Alfredo Garcia"* and people didn't send you to therapy. They sent men. With guns. In dust-covered Chevrolets.

You can't do things like those anymore.

Not even film them.
Not without fifteen disclaimers, three lawsuits, a trigger warning, and a panel discussion on ethics in revenge-driven cinema.

No more dirty fingernails, desert graves, or slow pans over twitching corpses.

Now it's drones and dialogue coaches.
Blood is CGI.
Anger is focus-grouped.

And the head of Alfredo Garcia?

Probably recast as a metaphor. For tecito.

THE NEXT MONTH

“It is SPAIN.
Maybe ITALY.
Or possibly MEXICO.
Or BRAZIL, or Argentina, or...?”

A pause.

“It is not Mexico.”

Someone says it with certainty, as if denying Mexico is the only fixed point in a spinning globe of confusion. A waitress walks past with a tray of beer and octopus. Accordion music seeps in from somewhere, maybe a radio, maybe a man.

Tiles on the wall. Hand-painted. Chipped.

The man next to me smokes a cigarette rolled with something that isn’t tobacco.
He says nothing.
But his shirt says *"Rio 1994."*

The wind says something else.

“It is not Mexico.”
That part is clear.

The rest?

Open to interpretation.

At least someone was playing *Mood Indigo* on a creaky Bluetooth speaker.

Creaky like a rocking chair left out in the rain, like cartilage going up stairs. But it played.
And that meant not *all* was lost.

Once, sin against taste was the greatest sin.
Serving white wine with steak. Wearing socks with sandals. Ending a sentence with a hashtag.
But **taste died**. And with it, the sinners.

Now?

To sin against the **jazz** is the most terrible sin.
To snap on 1 and 3.
To confuse swing with shuffle.
To call *Kenny G* a saxophonist.

And to revere the entrails of the unknowable—some abstract, air-conditioned deity, some divine algorithm—**higher than the meaning of the earth**, which is simple:
A slow descending line.
A trumpet mute.
A late entrance on bar 17.
A cigarette burning out before the chorus comes back.

The speaker crackles again.
Ellington sighs.

And for a moment, the air remembers how to be sad correctly.

I just told a 10-year-old there is no god. No zodiac signs either.
She looked at me, stubborn, jaw set like a stone chipped by cartoons and bedtime stories.

"Yes, he exists. Yes, they exist."

Then she kissed her father on the cheek and walked away. No fear. No questions. Just a child performing a ritual she didn't know was nearly extinct.

The father—
The father whose wrist I was undoing under the table with a short, serrated knife.

A deliberate operation.
Quiet.
Hidden.
Tendon by tendon, like slowly erasing a signature.

He sat straight. He didn't flinch. That was the rule. That was the *pact*.

No scream.
No twitch.
Not even a blink.

Or they die.
All of them.

Including the daughter who just kissed him. The daughter he'd never again be able to hold the same way. Never again twist her hair around his fingers. Never again lift her onto his shoulders.

He could feel it.
The cold blade.
The hot nerve.
The slow, permanent loss of a hand that once knew how to build and love and press buttons on a remote.

All he had to do was speak.
Say it.
Where the drug money was.
Where it went.

But he didn't.
Not yet.

Then I cut a tendon. **SNAP**.
Clean. Precise. Not a scream—but something broke. Not the tendon. *Him*.
His fingers collapsed. Drooped. Fell like puppets with their strings suddenly cut by a bored god.

He didn't cry. Didn't yell. Just folded forward, forehead on the table, breath shallow.
Like the girl once. The one who screamed **"Alfredo Garcia! Alfredo Garcia!"** with a broken arm and a voice that still echoes through bone.

Then he whispered it.

"The water tank. On the roof."

And that was it.

I looked around, instinctively—old reflex. Looked at the empty corners of the room, at the places where shadows used to be people.
I almost said it.

"Bring it to me."

But there was no one left.
No crew.
No men.
No Henchen, no Benny, no quiet ones with machetes and better instincts.

So I didn't say anything.
I stood up.
Shoved the bloodied napkins into my coat.
Lit a new cigarette with the same matchbook from last week's motel.

And I climbed.

Each step up the stairs was a negotiation with gravity and joints and all the consequences of being alive too long.

Up to the roof.
To the tank.
To get it myself.

My fucking **head of Alfredo Garcia**.

TO YOU, THE READER, NOW.

Yes, *you*.
Put down the tecito, wipe the pebre off your screen, and listen.

I'm tearing apart this fourth wall.
Yes—**Mr. Author, tear down this wall.**
Catch the reference? No? Of course not. You grew up on touchscreens and TikToks, not on history and hard liquor.
Try reading something other than school books. Try *thinking* without being graded.

As I was saying:
You. The reader.

How many times have I called you *Hypocrite lecteur,— mon semblable,— mon frère*?
And how many times have you nodded like you understood Baudelaire, when all you really caught was the comma?

But this time, no.

This time, I call you **gullible reader**.
Sweet, trusting, beautifully naive.

How many *Alba Pratalia* stories have you swallowed?
How many tales that begin with melancholia, wander into

jazz, sip whisky by the sea, spiral into torture, and collapse into absurdity?

You should have known.

Seriousness is never taken seriously.
Not here.
Not in this godforsaken plywood coastal pissbox.
Not in a story where the climax involves a CIA manual, a seafood spoon, and a daughter who believes in star signs.

There are always **musical numbers**.
Always **porn comedy**.
Always **Monty Pythons circling above**, ready to drop coconuts and existential crises in equal measure.

So tell me:
What made you believe we were going anywhere with this **optimistic tale of coastal drinking and CIA-approved chiropractice**?

Was it the weather?
The sound of *Mood Indigo* through a Bluetooth speaker with emphysema?
The promise of redemption through whisky and trauma?

You fool.
You beautiful, hopeful fool.

Now get ready.
The next scene has a talking fish and a Marxist barbershop quartet.

NEXT SCENE.

Two Englishmen in full **Edwardian safari kit**—pith helmets, khaki shorts, knee socks, mustaches trimmed with colonial precision—stand stiffly on an embankment by a muddy water canal.
They are **slapping each other in the face with dead fish.** Large ones. Slippery. Mackerel? Possibly trout.
No context is given.

Enter: **John Cleese**, striding in from stage left, furious, arms flailing like semaphore for *"this script is rubbish."*

> **CLEESE** (exasperated):
> "No, no, *no*! You can't just pull a sketch of ours whenever you run out of ideas! That's not how writing works!
> Silly, silly, silly. I'm pulling the plug."

He walks over to a wall—there is a wall, inexplicably—and yanks a **giant theatrical power cord** out of an oversized socket.

ZZZT—BOOM.

Everything plunges into darkness.

Voices emerge from the void. Unseen. Uncoordinated. Possibly drunk.

> **Voice 1:** "Damn. He really did it."
> **Voice 2:** "I can't see a thing."

Voice 3: "Where's my wine?"
Voice 4: "Where is *north*?"
Voice 5: "Señor... esta es mi rodilla nuevamente..."
Voice 6: "What? Where did the wrist guy go?"

Then—

Footsteps.
Hurried.
Fleeing.
Through gravel, through grass, through bureaucratic silence.

No one breathes.
Somewhere, a Bluetooth speaker tries to reconnect.

Cleese (from the dark):
"Good. Now maybe you'll write your *own* ending."

Book Author: *Cleese, get back.*
Cleese: *No.*

Author: *Cleese, I have cheese.*
Cleese: *Me too. Since my father.*

Author: *Cleese, I have Stinking Bishop.*
Cleese: *Give it a shower.*

Author: *Cleese... what is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow?*
Cleese: *I'm not getting into that.*

Author: *Cleese...*
Cleese: *(sigh) Okay, okay... African or European? Happy now?*

Author: *Cleese? I fart in your general direction.*
Cleese: *(grumbling, muttering) All right. Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries.*

Author: *Atta boy. That's my Cleese. Here, have some Gruyère.*
Cleese: *(takes cheese reluctantly) I wanted Wensleydale...*

Curtain falls.
Coconut clops echo.
Wine is poured.
Nothing is resolved.
Perfect.

A Latin lover?
A fucker, Marcello Mastroianni used to say.
"Me, a Latin lover? No. A tremendous **fucker**. A **worker** of sex, you know," he'd say, cigarette hanging like punctuation from his mouth, shirt half-buttoned, as if fabric itself obeyed his mood.

Latin, yes.
Not **Latino**, though—not quite.
Different continents, different sins.

Because the so-called *Latino man*—as too many *Latina women* know—has crafted for himself a reputation built on **uselessness**,
on treating women like ashtrays,
on taking without giving,
on fucking like accountants—
with one eye on the clock and the other on the exit.

They **own**, but do not **pleasure**.
They conquer, but do not worship.
They marry their mothers and expect their wives to mop up the mess.

And afterward?

A **tecito.**

A weeny tea.

The post-coital ritual of cowards.

Marcello wouldn't be caught dead sipping mint infusion after an orgasm.
He'd drink something flammable, kiss something sacred, and light a cigarette with a match struck on the curve of a lover's hip.

That's not myth. That's **method**.

And what do they want to be? The Latinos?

A lumberjack?
¿Un leñador?
Taming the wild south, braving bark and frost and tree-sap martyrdom?

Wrestling giants like:

—The **lenga**, defiant in snow
—The **ñire**, that snaps like a poet under pressure
—The **coihue**, ancient as disappointment
—The mythic **alerce**, whose rings remember every lie Pinochet ever told
—The **bearded cypress of Puerto Blando**, who asks you personal questions
—The **twisted nothofagus of Cerro SinNombre**, which laughs at your compass
—The **shrieking monkey puzzle of Villa O'Higgins**, whose branches point nowhere and everywhere
—The **heroic huinco tree of Tierra del Fuego**, who once saved a scout troop and never shut up about it
—The **slouching calafate bush**, not technically a tree, but it insists, shows up at meetings, votes
—The **oversharing maitén of Las Horquetas**, who begins every sentence with *"As a tree..."*
—The **polygamous pehuén of Neuquén**, who's in a committed relationship with six woodpeckers and a lichen
—The **thespian Patagonian ash**, who *only speaks in verse*, demands applause after every gust
—The **Andean weeping willow of Unrequited Love**, who's still crying over a pine that never texted back
—The **sassy sauce criollo of Trelew**, who rolls their leaves and side-eyes tourists

—The **photosynthetic philosopher of Lago Puelo**, quoting Spinoza to confused backpackers (*"God is in the chloroplasts, my dude"*)
—The **drunken myrtle**, who bellows *"¡Yo soy el bosque!"* at every full moon, and once dated a ranger
—The **Quercus Patagoniensis Ricardo Daríus**, a tree with a dramatic stare and a tragic subplot
—The **Juanes Hughius Gauchus Giganticus**, so large it pays two types of taxes
—And of course, the rarely seen but oft-whispered **Chilean Arboreal Bastard Tree**, which flips off hikers with branch-fingers and only pollinates during allergy season.

Do they want to face this?
No.
They do not.

They want a **safe income**,
a **flat screen TV**,
and a fucking **tecito**.

Weak chamomile dreams under LED lighting.

No fucking life in us.
Us, the fucking **Latinos**.
Colonies of Spaniards.
Of the **Catholics**.
Colonies of **subjects**, not citizens. Not humans.
Trained to kneel before the flag, the altar, the boss, the goddamn soccer match.

Never allowed initiative.
Never permitted **growth**.
Hope? **Imported**, taxed, and delayed at customs.
Always **under the foot**.

Now?

Now it's just a **bigger foot**.
Neoliberal.

Shiny. Branded. Market-verified.

Stay under.
Stay just a little longer.
Smile for the ad.
Crave the sneakers, the phone, the lifestyle you saw on a screen.
Desire *markets*.
Desire *goods*.
Desire *what you are told to desire*.
Sign for it.
Pay for it with your soul in monthly installments.

Consume.
Produce.
Comply.
Die.
Under the foot.

And when the foot comes down—
SPLAT—
no drama.

No resistance.
Just blood, receipts, and a whisper:

"Thank you for shopping with us."

[INT. A pristinely minimalistic APPLE-TYPE STORE. White walls. One counter. No stock visible. Ambient music playing softly — possibly Gregorian chants remixed by AI.]

[ENTER CUSTOMER: An intelligent, sharply dressed gentleman with an air of desperation and rage bubbling just beneath the surface.]

Customer:
Good morning, sir.

Shopkeeper (cheerfully):
Ah, hello! Welcome to *The iPhone Boutique*. How may I serve you today?

Customer:
Well, I was passing by, and being rather in the mood for an iPhone, I thought I'd pop in and—

Shopkeeper (interrupting, beaming):
Ah! An excellent choice, sir! iPhones are all the rage this decade. Which model were you interested in?

Customer:
Oh, I don't know, something absurdly expensive and functionally identical to the last four models.

Shopkeeper:
That would be the **iPhone XVs Pro Max Hyper Ultra with Selfie Stabilization and Thermonuclear App Store**, sir.

Customer:
Yes, that sounds sufficiently insulting to my intelligence. I'll take one.

Shopkeeper (still smiling):
Oh, I'm terribly sorry, sir. We're fresh out of that one.

Customer:
All right, then. What *do* you have?

Shopkeeper:
Uhm... we have... screen protectors.

Customer:
Yes?

Shopkeeper:
Not in stock.

Customer:
Right. How about an iPhone 13?

Shopkeeper:
Ah! Classic! Unfortunately, we just sold our last one to a TikTok influencer who needed it as a coaster.

Customer:
Twelve?

Shopkeeper:
Obsolete.

Customer:
Eleven?

Shopkeeper:
Retro-chic, sir. Sold out months ago to a vintage camera enthusiast.

Customer:
What *do* you have?

Shopkeeper:
We have **USB-C cables** that don't fit any current model, a Bluetooth speaker shaped like Steve Jobs' head, and an iPhone case made of artisanal goat leather hand-massaged by monks from Cupertino.

Customer:
No phones?

Shopkeeper:
Well, there's a *rumor* of a refurbished iPhone 6 in the back, but it caught fire last Tuesday and bit a child.

Customer:
I see.

[Long pause.]

Customer:
Do you, in fact, have *any* iPhones?

Shopkeeper:
No.

Customer:
You *do* realize this is an iPhone shop?

Shopkeeper:
Well yes, technically, but we're more of a *conceptual space*. A post-phone marketplace. A lifestyle womb.

Customer:
A lifestyle womb?

Shopkeeper:
Yes. We give the *experience* of wanting a phone. Not the phone itself.

Customer:
I see.

[The customer pulls out a Nokia 3310 and clubs the shopkeeper unconscious.]

Customer (to camera):
And that, dear viewers, is why I switched to Android.

Reader:
Oh hey, author. You know what? I'm losing touch with your story here.

Writer:
I beg your pardon?

Reader:
You're just... deranging now. Monty Python, Mastroianni, shrieking monkey puzzle trees—what the hell is this? You're just throwing things at the page.

Writer:
Oh shut up.

Reader:
You shut up. You've clearly got nothing left to say and you're just dragging it out like a drunk uncle who missed the ending and started making up his own.

Writer:
Well, that's your opinion.

Reader:
And that's yours.

Writer:
But it's not the *same*, is it? You're just a reader. A consumer. Passive. I have *plenty*. I am a *writer*. I speak to millions.

Reader:
You don't have—

Writer (interrupts):
Yes I do.
In my head. In projection. In ambition. In delusion.
That's *all* a writer needs. Readers are optional.
Hallucinated, even. You may not even be real. Maybe I wrote *you* too.

Reader:
Bullshit.

Writer:
No. *Postmodernism.*

Reader:
Cheap trick.

Writer:
Cheap medium.

[Long pause.]

Reader (quietly):
So... you're just going to keep going?

Writer:
Until someone cuts the power cord again. Or the whisky runs out. Whichever comes first.

[Blackout. Gregorian chanting. One of the trees mutters something about Spinoza.]

Author:
You know, dear reader, I am disposed awhile to play the sophist with you; not of *their* sort—those modern charlatans who, powdered in academic perfume, boozle young men's heads with empty notions, curious trifles, and seminar-room fog, yet teach them nothing save a more-than-womanish obstinacy of scolding.

No. Not that.

Rather, I'll imitate the ancients.
Those who, to sidestep the mockery that clings to the name *wise*, called themselves *sophists*—players in dialectic, jugglers of reason, ironists in sandals.
Not wise.
Just willing to argue.

I won't pretend I lead you somewhere.
I'll just walk beside you in circles, pointing out mirages, kicking stones, and asking questions with no safe answer.

And when you shout "*You're making no sense!*"
I'll say: "That's right. I've been quite careful."

Because if you want clarity, you came to the wrong monologue.

If you want truth, you brought the wrong currency.

And if you want an ending—
Well, you'll have to write that part yourself.

As **Professor Jones** stated quite clearly—
FACT (underlined, bold, italic, projected overhead, and shouted over explosions),
not truth.

If it's *truth* you're interested in,
Dr. Tyree's Philosophy class is right down the hall.
Room 2B. Smells faintly of despair and bergamot.
Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays.
Bring your own paradox.

But here?

Here we deal in **facts**.
Cold. Hard. Possibly fabricated.
Dug from tombs, stolen from libraries, shouted mid-car chase.

Truth is for monks.
Fact is for archaeologists with whips.

Now pass me the artifact and duck.

We, dear reader,
do **not** follow maps to buried treasure.
And **X**—despite what pulp, pirates, and pedagogues have promised you—**never, ever marks the spot**.

We follow rumors.
Footnotes in forgotten footlockers.
Scrawled notes on the back of unpaid utility bills.
We follow the sound of doors creaking where there should be no doors,
and the scent of old leather that wasn't there yesterday.

We don't dig.
We *uncover*.
By mistake. By madness. By misdirection.

And when we find something?

It's never what we were looking for.
Just what we *deserve*.

Do we, dear reader, in this deranged time of ours,
have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word *"being"*?

Not at all.

We barely know what we mean by *"Monday"*, or *"freedom"*, or *"Reply All"*.
We stand in queues for coffee and call it ritual.
We click "Accept Cookies" and call it consent.
We post selfies and call it *presence*.
We vanish from each other while talking.

And so—
is it fitting that we should raise anew the question of the **meaning of Being**?

I think so.

But I'd like to hear your opinion.
Yes, you.
Don't look around.

Is *being* something we do, or something that happens to us?
Is it located in breath, or in billing addresses?
In action, or attention?
Is it prepackaged, or assembled post-purchase with an Allen key and an identity crisis?

Tell me, dear reader.

Are *you* being?
Or just refreshing?

Are we... *are* we, dear reader,
in this meaningless now and day and age (*o tempora, o mores!*)
even **perplexed** by our inability to grasp the expression *"Being"*?

Not at all!
We have **wild boars with a major in mathematics** furiously Googling for answers,
having long since **forgotten the questions**.
We chant data, believe in metrics, and take polls of our souls.
We call the void and ask to speak to customer service.

“Watchman, what is left of the night?”
And the watchman replies, “Morning is coming, but also the night.
If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again.”

Do you get it, reader?
Ask.
Then come back and ask **again**.
Don’t settle.
Don’t go gentle into the multiple-choice format.
Interrogate the silence.
Tickle the absurdity.
Poke *Being* with a stick until it either purrs or explodes.

So, shall we, first of all,
reawaken an understanding for the **meaning** of this question?

Again, I think so.
But *again*, I’d like to hear **your** opinion, dear reader,
my similar, my brother.

(Oh shit. I **Baudelaire’d** you again.)

If you’ve kept reading up to this point, dear reader,
and didn’t get offended,
didn’t feel gaslit or **mansplained**,
didn’t storm off to annotate the margins with your **pronouns**,
or staple a *trigger warning* to the cover,

—I’m afraid you're not green anymore.

You've had your springs and your autumns
slide quietly away on you.
They didn't announce their departure.
They didn't slam the door.
They just left,
like dinner guests who realized you had no dessert.

So, dear reader,
do you still remember that time of your mortal life,
when beauty shone
in your laughing, fleeting eyes,
and you, happy and thoughtful,
climbed the threshold of youth with both hands gripping
nothing in particular?

Do you remember
when we lived in a world
where everything was still to be done,
and where everything, or almost everything,
was still to be done wrong?

Do you remember the thrill of failure,
the delicious idiocy of believing we might get it right next time,
the freedom of a future unbuilt and unruined?

If you do,
then stay.
If not—

well, there's tea in the other room.

Fellow reader, fellow of nothing,
did you save yourself from the smoke
of the *right things*
that need to be done?

Did you dodge the respectable blaze—
marriage, mortgage, mindfulness apps—
that slow incineration
we call **a good life**?

Fellow reader, fellow of nothing,
did you save yourself?
Or did you quit drinking too?

Did you pour out the bottle
with the bathwater,
wipe the counter,
and say "I'm fine" like a prayer
to a god you no longer believe in?

Did you trade delirium for hydration,
truth for sleep,
danger for *contentment*?

Did you?

Or are you still here,
glass in hand,
book in the other,
hoping the ending doesn't come
with a wellness plan?

Tell me, reader,
tell me:
why, lying at ease, idle,
every animal—
any man, the most brutish of beasts—
is content?

Why do they close their eyes and hum in their fur,
belly to the sun,
tail twitching at peace?

But **why me**,
when I lie at rest,
does **tedium** assail?

You know that tedium, reader.
Your boredom.
The one with your name on it.
The boredom that paces the room in your socks.
The kind that smells like your unwashed dishes and your unopened messages.
The boredom that hums when everything else is quiet.

Another person's boredom is worth nothing.
You wouldn't rent it. You wouldn't even pity it.
It's not transferrable. Not communicable. Not even theatrical.

But **yours—**
yours is sacred.

And so you scream.
Not out loud. Not at first.
You scream by refreshing tabs.
You scream by replying "haha" to things that weren't funny.
You scream in thirty-second videos and planned spontaneity.

You scream to **hide** the desire,
the fact that you are sad,
or bored,
and all your doubts
that *being* here
was ever enough.

The day will come, dear reader,
when all the cocksuckers and pains in the ass will finally vanish.
Yes—
they'll melt into paperwork, into traffic jams they once caused, into tecitos they once ordered.

And I?
I'll be there.
Ready.
To speak with the lemons.

One who is **yellow**,
one who is **green**,
one who **screams but doesn't give up**.

The paths will follow the ridges,
they'll **descend through tufts of reeds**,
and they'll lead, quietly and precisely,
to the **vegetable gardens**,
among the **lemon trees**.

There, finally, we poor get our portion of **wealth**—
not gold, not peace, not salvation.
Just this:
the **smell of lemons**.

And one day, through a badly closed door,
among the trees of a courtyard
in some forgotten hour of the afternoon,
the **yellows of lemons** will flash before us.
Bright. Unashamed. True.

And the **frost in the heart** melts.
And the songs,
those old, bitter, brave songs
begin again—
and in our chests they thunder:

the golden trumpets of sunshine.

Afterword

Alba Pratalia

This book was written slowly, and with full awareness that it may be misunderstood. That risk was not incidental—it was, in part, the point. Over the last decade, I have come to see writing not as an act of transmission, but of interruption. This book is not built to guide or persuade. It is meant to destabilize, to hover at the edges of coherence while refusing the comfort of full nonsense. It occupies that in-between space where satire, absurdism, and grief often overlap.

The early drafts began in fragments. The tone was inconsistent, and I let it stay that way. Our world no longer speaks in one register. We code-switch between irony and sincerity, urgency and parody, without warning. What I wanted was a narrative voice porous enough to reflect that. A voice that could move from philosophical inquiry to slapstick, from political despair to musical farce, without smoothing over the ruptures.

My influences are multiple and incompatible by design. I read and reread Beckett and Bernhard, for rhythm and momentum. I returned to Monty Python, not for nostalgia, but for their mastery of tonal collapse. I drew from the fragmented monologues of Gadda, the violent swing between high and low in Céline, and the obsessive cataloguing impulse of Perec. I learned from authors who let structure fray, who allowed tone to break down, and who refused to protect the reader from discomfort.

The writing process was long and disjointed. Some passages were written in isolation, others in the noise of cafés and airports. I wrote while listening to jazz, to laughter, to distant protests. I revised sparingly. I wanted the prose to retain a certain instability. Much of what's in this book arrived uninvited and remained because it felt true—not factual, but formally honest.

The question that recurs throughout the book is whether satire can survive in a world that no longer respects seriousness. I don't offer a clear answer. My suspicion is that satire, now, must turn its focus away from power and toward *form*—away from critique and toward disorientation. When power absorbs irony as easily as sincerity, the only remaining gesture is structural resistance: breaking genre, undermining tone, refusing closure.

I do not think satire is dead. But it has lost its moral certainty. What remains is tension: between comedy and collapse, between performance and silence. This book is an attempt to hold that tension without resolving it.

To those who read it patiently—thank you.
To those who felt lost, annoyed, or uncertain—thank you also.
You were meant to.

—Alba Pratalia
Valparaíso
June 2025

In this genre-defying, ferociously inventive work, Alba Pratalia dismantles the boundaries of narrative, satire, memoir, and metafiction, guiding the reader through a hallucinatory landscape where the absurd is indistinguishable from the real. Anchored loosely in the jungles of a Herzogian fever dream, the book unfurls across time and geography—slipping from South American coastlines to CIA black sites, from jazz elegies to barroom philosophy—without warning or apology.

A meditation on art, violence, memory, and decay, *Bring the Head of Alfredo Kinski* explores a world unmoored by ideology and overrun by banality. Its narrator, unreliable yet hauntingly precise, offers a monologue that veers from comic set-piece to existential despair in a single paragraph, addressing the reader directly, mercilessly, as both accomplice and witness.

At once a lament for lost rage and a savage indictment of neoliberal submission, this is a novel of profound unrest. Beneath its comedic grotesquery lies a fierce intelligence and a radical rejection of literary passivity. Pratalia does not comfort. Pratalia incinerates.

This edition includes an afterword by the author on the writing process, literary influences, and the question of whether satire can still survive the end of seriousness.